

# Apple Bites



*Helping  
Teachers  
Teach and  
Children  
Learn*

## **Governor Bredesen Names Dr. Tim Webb Tennessee Commissioner of Education**

Dr. Tim Webb was sworn in as Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education July 24.

“I am honored that Governor Bredesen has given me this opportunity,” Webb said. “I look forward to continuing the great work of the Department of Education in putting children and teachers first and striving to ensure equal, safe, and quality learning opportunities for all students.”

Webb is a native of Howenwald and a retired Tennessee Army National Guardsman. Dr. Webb’s education career began in the Lewis County School System as a math and social studies teacher. He later held the positions of assistant prin-



Dr. Timothy K. Webb

icipal, System-wide Title II Coordinator and Superintendent of Schools. Since joining the Tennessee Department of Education in 2003, Dr. Webb has served as Assistant Commissioner for Resources and Support Services and Deputy Commissioner. Webb holds a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University.

## **ELL in Tennessee**

Tennessee is ranked fifth in the nation for the growth of its foreign-born population and has been named a new destination state. Inside, learn how three Tennessee school districts - Metro Nashville Public Schools, Warren County Schools and Shelby County Schools - are helping growing ELL populations succeed in their new community.

### **Inside Apple Bites**

Teacher of the Year Finalists p.2

Blackman High School’s Award and Sales Tax Holiday p.3

MNPS International Newcomer’s Academy p.4

CoverKids Offers Free Healthcare for Uninsured Youth p.6

ELL Summer Programs in TN p.7

GEAR UP steers TN students toward college success p.8

## Congratulations to Tennessee's 2009 Teacher of the Year Finalists



Pam Thomas, 32 years  
Sevier County Schools



Meera Krishnan, 8 years  
Shelby County Schools



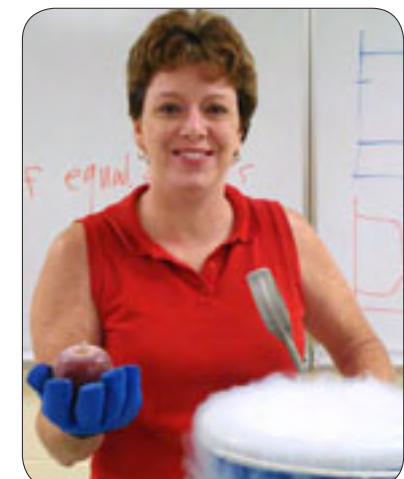
Emily Staggs, 21 years  
Cheatham County Schools



Mike Brown, 16 years  
Clarksville/Montgomery  
County Schools



Stella Campbell, 27 years  
Clarksville/Montgomery  
County Schools



Patricia Royle, 6 years  
Benton County Schools



Luajean Bryan, 35 years  
Bradley County Schools



Tana Mitchell, 12.5 years  
Memphis City Schools



Betsy Elliott, 21 years  
Sevier County Schools



## Rutherford County's Blackman High School Selected as National Model

The Southern Regional Education Board selected Blackman High School as a national model for its implementation of the High Schools That Work school improvement program. Of more than 1,200 schools using the HSTW program, 25 were chosen for the honor of being named a HSTW Pacesetter School.

The designation means Blackman High School will be a model site for the next two years. To earn this award, each school had to have 85 percent of students meet at least one HSTW readiness goal; complete one or more parts of the HSTW curriculum; complete a concentration; and achieve 'high implementation' status.

Blackman High School serves more than 1,680 students and has a graduation rate of 91.8 percent. HSTW trains middle and high school leaders and teachers on research-based ways to raise student achievement and is in use in 31 states. Blackman High School was recognized July 9 during the 2008 HSTW Summer Staff Development Conference at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel.



[www.tntaxholiday.com](http://www.tntaxholiday.com)

August 1 - 3, 2008

The Next Sales Tax Holiday is  
August 1-3

Please visit the new [www.tntaxholiday.com](http://www.tntaxholiday.com) where you can find updated lists of exempt items, retailer information, news and more. You can also access Sales Tax Holiday information via the Department of Revenue's home page, [www.Tennessee.gov/revenue](http://www.Tennessee.gov/revenue). Exempt items will remain the same and include:

- School and school art supplies with a price of \$100 or less per item
- Clothing with a price of \$100 or less per item
- Computers with a price of \$1,500 or less

### Questions?

- Call (800) 342-1003, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Central Time.
- E-mail [Salestax.Holiday@state.tn.us](mailto:Salestax.Holiday@state.tn.us).
- Visit [www.tntaxholiday.com](http://www.tntaxholiday.com).

## Metro Nashville Public Schools International Newcomer Academy



Nashville has been an active refugee resettlement destination since the mid-1970s. As the number of immigrant and refugee families increased and diversified in terms of language, culture, and especially educational backgrounds through the '80s and '90s, it became apparent that special courses and programs would be necessary to meet the needs of many of our newcomer ELL students, both refugees and immigrants. Early attempts to provide language and academic support were in part addressed by offering extra English language development (ELD) and sheltered content classes

when possible. But a comprehensive newcomer program to address social and cultural issues, as well as provide language and academic support, was long recognized as the goal of an effective program.

In the spring of 2007, with the leadership of Dr. LaWanna Shelton, planning began at the district level to turn the goal into reality. In the summer, veteran teachers Judy Edwards and Cheryl Jolley were appointed as International Newcomer Academy (INA) teachers and assigned the responsibility of developing and implementing the new program. While MNPS would have liked to serve all ELL newcomers at the academy, the district recognized

the necessity of limiting numbers and focusing on the most needy refugees and immigrants. Qualifying criteria for entrance into the academy are 1) no English, 2) little or no prior schooling, and 3) little or no native language literacy.

The International Newcomer Academy has completed the first year with measurable success in oral language and literacy. In addition, the children gained skills in math and citizenship. Perhaps most important was the evidence of strong self-confidence they exhibited as their INA experience ended and they readied themselves for

**CONT. page 5...**



successful transition to their home schools in the fall.

Over the last year, MNPS has received positive press for being innovative in the creation of its International Newcomer Academy. It has had a wide reaching impact in the district. From the classroom teacher and school administrator to district office personnel, educators have expressed their excitement and delight in seeing an environment where the needs of the refugee newcomer can easily be met. Visitors from near and far have come to visit the model classrooms in action, gaining awareness and perspective as to the social and academic complexities these stu-

dents face. This academy was nationally recognized at the 2007 Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) Summit in Washington D.C. The academy works with community groups and resettlement agencies to insure successful adaptation into our schools and the wider Nashville community.

MNPS plans on continuing with the International Newcomer Academy as long as the need exists. Tennessee is

designated as a new destination state.

With Catholic Charities and World Relief sponsoring refugees, the need may exist for years to come.

The International Newcomer Academy will expand or reduce its classroom size on a year to year evaluation and ideally will have other campuses. For example, if the Antioch area continues to grow, MNPS will consider developing an INA there. The yearly evaluation means an INA campus may change locations based on need, but Dr. Shelton plans to maintain the original central location. The initial two INA classrooms have expanded

into three classes for the 2008-2009 school year. Both the elementary and high school classes will have 16 students and the middle school will have 12, servicing 44 students this upcoming year.

Cheryl Jolley and Judy Edwards have worked on revising the curriculum and developing entrance exams in the native languages.

Nicole Chaput, our middle school ELD specialist, has

worked with Ms. Jolley and Ms. Edwards, and Deana Conn, HS ELD specialist, to create DVDs in the native language that introduce and

explain the International Newcomer Center. Currently, the DVD is available in several languages. MNPS anticipates newcomers from Togo, Burma, Nepal and Somalia. The INA classrooms are ESL training classes. Teachers will have the opportunity to experience the use of English to teach non-English speakers to speak, without any assistance in the native language.

***Tennessee is designated as a new destination state. With Catholic Charities and World Relief sponsoring refugees, the need may exist for years to come.***



## Free Healthcare for Uninsured Youth

**Every child** attending a Tennessee public school will take home a CoverKids informational flyer this year in a campaign to get health insurance coverage to Tennessee's uninsured children.

"Providing children with quality health coverage is one of the best investments we can make in their future," said Governor Phil Bredesen. "I encourage every parent to look for the CoverKids information in their child's back-to-school packet and to take the necessary steps to enroll any child who doesn't have health insurance."

With the Department of Education, CoverKids is coordinating the distribution of 1.5 million informational flyers to Tennessee's public school children.

The flyers provide detailed instructions for parents on how to enroll their children in CoverKids. The flyer also includes a self-addressed, postage-paid card so parents can request an application in the mail or have a CoverKids representative call them about enrolling.

"We received more than 13,600 CoverKids applications as a result



of our back-to-school efforts last year," said Dr. Andrea D. Willis, CoverKids Director. "We're working very hard this year to reach every child who could possibly benefit from the CoverKids program because as we all know, a healthy child is more likely to learn and more likely to stay in school."

A family of four earning \$53,000 a year or less may qualify for CoverKids. Once enrolled, these families pay no monthly premiums for their children's coverage. Doctor visits range from \$5 to \$15; generic medications cost as little as \$5; and there are no co-pays for immunizations, routine well-exams, labs or x-rays. Families above the household income limit can pay \$225 a month for each child they want to enroll in CoverKids. CoverKids insurance does not have deductibles. BlueCross/BlueShield of Tennessee administers the CoverKids program.

CoverKids currently has 24,176 members in the program.

CoverKids is part of Cover Tennessee, Bredesen's multi-pronged effort to extend health insurance to Tennessee's uninsured.

Cover Tennessee's other programs are: CoverTN, affordable, basic health insurance to small businesses, individuals and the self-employed; AccessTN, comprehensive health insurance for Tennesseans with uninsurable or chronic health care conditions; and CoverRx, a pharmacy assistance program providing uninsured Tennesseans access to affordable prescriptions.

For more information on any of the Cover Tennessee programs, visit [www.CoverTN.gov](http://www.CoverTN.gov) or call 1-866-COVERTN.

## Summer Programs for English Language Learners



Summer programs for English language learners are becoming more and more the standard for early summer in Tennessee. Children who do not experience English in the home as much as in school strengthen English language skills through innovative educational programs. Both Warren and Shelby Counties have strong programs for ELL students under the leadership of Dianna Zadeh and Todd Go-forth, respectively.

More than 200 English language learners attended the Tennessee School Board award-winning Shelby County Schools summer program and camp from June 9-20, 2008. English language learners spent two weeks being exposed to numerous brain-based strategies through content related to the 2008 Summer Olympics. Students made medals, Olympic rings, country maps, Chinese dragons and many other items related to the upcoming Olympics.

The summer program gave English language learners numerous opportunities to use and improve their social language and communication skills. During the closing ceremony, parents of the English language learners were invited to attend the games and share in the celebration. This is the second year that Shelby County Schools has conducted the summer program for ELL students. The program was recently recognized in the Mid-South Spanish Newspaper, *La Prensa Latina*, for its outstanding outreach to Spanish-speaking children and parents in the community.

Warren County was "Goin' Bananas" with almost 200 students involved in a four-week, full day instructional, standards-based program. Teachers, while focusing on ten of the 55 Essential Rules for a Successful Student by Ron Clark, pre-taught science vocabulary and reinforced math vocabulary for students from kindergarten to ninth grade. Kindergarteners learned to write their names, the

names of shapes, and essential social skills needed to be successful in kindergarten. Science lessons were included from first grade through ninth grade. Overall, the students averaged an approximate gain of 26 points between second and ninth grade on the specific skills tested. Younger children had physical education classes and learned about battle ball, t-ball, soccer and other sports. Older children were given access to a computer lab.

Parents were entertained with theme-based songs and cheers for Parent Night and were given a "Banana Cookbook" containing recipes in Spanish and English for banana dishes. Parents also went home with a DVD scrapbook of the program highlights. All children enrolled in the summer program had a part in the Parent Night program. More than 80% of parents attended this program.



## GEAR UP TN Coaches Students for Success after High School

Nearly 200 students visited four Nashville college campuses, the state capitol building and the state museum June 2-3 as part of GEAR UP TN's inaugural Youth Summit 2008. The participating GEAR UP TN students resided at The Commons on Vanderbilt University's Peabody Campus and got a small dose of the college experience over the two days.

"Our goal for the GEAR UP TN Youth Summit was to host an educational and cultural enrichment experience focused on college access, the college experience, and Tennessee's local and state government," said Deborah Boyd, associate executive director for P-16 initiatives at the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. "We are thrilled with the event's success and look forward to hosting another next year."

In addition to Vanderbilt University, participants toured Tennessee State University, Belmont University and Nashville State Technical Community College. On each campus, a specific aspect of college life, such as financial aid and academics, was discussed with the group.

The students enjoyed a special treat when Richie McDonald, formerly of Lone Star, shared an inspiring message about overcoming obstacles,

daring to dream, and achieving those dreams through higher education at a formal banquet held in honor of the students.

Additionally, after the



Youth Summit concluded, 89 students and 25 adults traveled the rest of the week on a college road trip visiting Middle Tennessee State University, Tennessee Technological University, Roane State Community College, University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Tennessee Wesleyan College, Lee University and University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. The group stayed overnight in dorms at TWC and UTC. Tours and admission sessions were held at all of the campuses.

In conjunction with the Youth Summit, GEAR UP TN held its Institute for School Leadership June 1-5 on Vanderbilt's Peabody Campus. Thirty-five principals, assistant principals, school directors, school counselors, directors of schools and teachers from GEAR UP TN's nine counties learned about preparing students to attend and succeed in college. GEAR UP TN, TDOE, THEC, the State Board of Education and Peabody Professional Institutes all partnered together in the effort.

"[Through the Institute] I became more aware of how culture shapes learning and how, as a teacher, I can shape the culture of the school," said a participating teacher.

In September 2005, Tennessee received a \$21 million GEAR UP grant from the U.S. Department of Education. GEAR UP TN, which serves nine counties (Campbell, Cocke, Grundy, Hardeman, Johnson, Lake, Meigs, Union and Wayne), provides services to students and their families, educators and community and business leaders to significantly increase the number of students prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

For more information on GEAR UP TN visit [http://collegefortn.org/gear\\_up/](http://collegefortn.org/gear_up/).